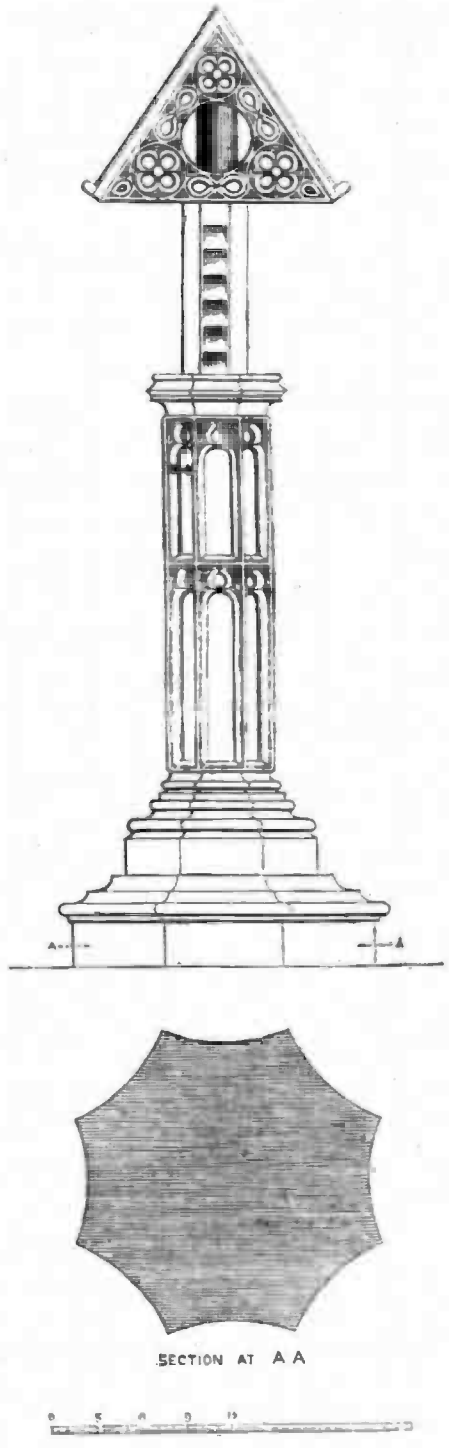
lections. The circular-headed panels, filled with tracery, evince an unerring proof of the decay of Gothic architecture, or rather of the approach of a style attempting in vain to blend it with its antagonist, the Italian. The architecture in French and German MSS. of this time often appears no less crowded with excess of detail, than do the "flamboyant" churches of the continent.

The fifteenth century was an age of wonder in Italy. The gothic style which never obtained a firm footing in that country, for which it was not suited, was now entirely discarded at the dawn of the "Renaissance," and the discovery of numerous grotesques of Roman art was eminently calculated to foster the change of taste which had sprung up in manly ripeness, rather than by progressive stages by which changes of any character are generally effected. Ancient Roman art was now the study of all architects, sculptors, painters, and decorators. The artist and the illuminator were one; hence the reason why the borders and other ornamental accessories of MSS. of the time were almost counterparts of such decorations as cover the walls of the Loggia of the Vatican, and shine throughout the gorgeous churches and palaces of Rome, Florence, and the Venetian States. The sculptured pilasters of the periods exhibit the same feeling of design, i. e. the arabesque of classic antiquity rendered still more elegant by the influence of such minds as those of Giovanni da Udine and Francesco Veronese.* The engraving, fig. 14, is taken from the frontispiece to the "De Evangelicâ Preparatione" of Eusebius, exécuted in Italy towards the close of the fifteenth century, and the most beautiful Italian work possessed by the British Museum.

It appears, therefore, upon the whole, that architectural features found in the backgrounds of miniatures in illuminated MSS. are to be variously regarded. In the first place, the inaccuracy which characterises their drawing and perspective may, in a great measure, be owing to the exclusiveness of Freemasonry, whereby a correct knowledge of the nature and principles of architecture was strictly and religiously confined to one class of the community. The comparatively late period at which this fraternity was authoritatively established in England in no way militates against the supposition; for, had not some similar system obtained long previously, no agency could have rendered so complete the similarity of contemporary edifices, nor have accomplished all transitions, modifications, and changes of style so simultaneously in widely separated localities. Again, there is good evidence for believing that in most cases ancient drawings may be depended upon as rude representations of existing buildings; for in some specimens of Anglo-Saxon date "long and short work" is well depicted; Norman MS. ornaments occur resembling some of the sculptured capitals and tympana which have descended to us; stiff-leaved Early English foliage, as we have already shewn, also finds a place in the pages of mediæval MSS., and a resort to nature, so prevalent in the time of "decorated" architecture, is no less observable in book illustrations of the fourteenth century. But buildings, towers, porches, and furniture often present themselves, which it would be impossible actually to execute, but which seem to prove that illuminators had notions of ideal beauty in architecture, and that these they endeavoured to embody in the religious books which it was their office to beautify. And in order to render every thing painted as picturesque as possible, ancient artists, in depicting architectural subjects, gave to minor details an undue importance in proportion to the whole, and often enriched them with designs, in a manner only intended to please the eye, regardless of the capability of sculpture for producing them. Discrimination, in possession of the above facts, may be enabled to render these beautiful monuments available, particularly with reference to the study of early periods, and the architectural classifications under which they may be comprehended.

* A superb MS. Pontificale illuminated by this artist for Pope Sextus VI., and warmly described by Dr. Dibdin in the "Decameron," was formerly in the Esdaile collection, and is now in the possession of Mr. Farman.

LECTERN, NEWPORT CHURCH, ESSEX.



LECTERN, NEWPORT CHURCH, ESSEX.

NEWPORT, 3½ miles from Saffron Walden, in Essex, contains a fine handsome church. Amongst much that is interesting in the interior is an oak lectern, of which we give this week an engraving. It is in good preservation, and in use.

The original colours of the shaft still remain, and are as follow:—The bead at top of capping *white*, hollow and cant *red*, fillet and hollow *green*. All the beads to shaft *white*, the panels being alternately *green* ground with *red* fillets and hollows, and *red* ground with *green* fillets and hollows. The red panels above stand over the green ones below, and *vice versâ*. The portion that is moveable is coloured *red*.

The lectern at Littlebury Church, 5 miles from Newport, was engraved by us some time ago.

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